

A God Story...

Past Tense, Present Grace

Advent 2025 has come and gone. The preparation began months ago to get just the right gifts and prepare just the right meal and environment for family. For all the build up...it is over in a snap. Now, houses are already being de-Christmased. Even the department stores took most of their Christmas sections taken down on December 26.

We find ourselves in familiar territory. Do we look back or do we look ahead? There are good reasons to remember...but, the Bible clearly tells us to live in the present and look ahead in great anticipation for what will be. Christmas was a moment in time that changes everything...but, they and we can't live in that past moment.

Imagine those nearest to the Christmas story and how they could have longed for those days. Mary, Joseph, and the Shepherds.

The Days That Followed

21 And at the end of eight days, when he was circumcised, he was called Jesus, the name given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. Luke 2:21

22 And when the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, they brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord 23 (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") 24 and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Luke 2:22-24

41 Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover. 42 And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom. Luke 2:41-42

Longing For the Past

Lot's Wife

26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt. Genesis 19:26

In the Wilderness

5 We remember the fish we ate in Egypt that cost nothing, the cucumbers, the melons, the leeks, the onions, and the garlic. Numbers 11:5

We all look back in our own ways. It is when we long and cling to the past that we are anchored there and miss the present moments, life, and God's ever-present grace.

Good 'ole days	Old Identity	Former Labels
Past sins	What ifs	Paralyzing Regret/Guilt/Shame
Self-Condensation	Unforgiveness	Debts Owed
Past Victories	Old Methods	Comparison/Judgement

Forward is Everything

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12-14

"Forgetting" here doesn't mean a literal loss of memory. It means breaking the power of the past, so it no longer dictates your present identity, joy, effectiveness, and eternal security.

The Garden, the Manger, and the Cross each represent moments when the line between Heaven and Earth, the Creator and His creation, between God and man was removed. Yet, we can't live in those past moments...only the present peace that those moments represent and promise today and forever.

The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

The Second Mile: *Going Beyond Sunday*

Let's dig deeper together to see how God is calling and equipping each of us to reach the lost.

Monday – The holidays are a tangible representation of transition. We literally redecorate for each holiday. Why don't we transition as effectively in our hearts and minds?

Tuesday – It is natural to cling to the past. What are things that you cling to? How can those limit your present joy and happiness?

Wednesday – Life and time continue to move on...ready or not. How can you prepare yourself and keep moving forward? What do you look forward to?

Thursday – Paul said, "forgetting what lies behind". How can you both remember the past AND continue moving forward? How can you avoid those memories/feelings from limiting your today?

Friday – The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. What is God asking you to leave behind? How is/has He made you a new creation?